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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG PFOR CH KS US
SUBJECT: GULF OIL'S ROK CONCESSION
REF: SEOUL 3637 (NOTAL), SEOUL 1456 (NOTAL)

1. CONCERNING THE OFFSHORE BLOCK IV OIL CONCESSION, IN ANSWER TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION ON THE OIL EXPLORATION AT A GENERAL PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 20, CHANG YIE-JOON, MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, SAID GULF HAD INFORMED THE ROKG THAT GULF DID NOT INTEND TO CONDUCT FURTHER EXPLORATION, THAT IT WAS WILLING TO RELINQUISH THE CONCESSION, AND THAT THE ROKG WAS LOOKING FOR A NON-U.S. FIRM TO TAKE OVER EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES THERE. CHANG, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, DECLINED TO ELABORATE ON THE REASON FOR GULF'S ACTION, EXCEPT TO SAY THAT "IT IS A DELICATE DIPLOMATIC PROBLEM". HOWEVER, PRESS ACCOUNTS SPECULATE THAT U.S.-PRC RELATIONS WERE INVOLVED.

2. WE UNDERSTAND FROM A KOREAN JOURNALIST THAT CHANG'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS UNPLANNED. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, A REPORTER ASKED IN GENERAL TERMS ABOUT THE OIL EXPLORATION SITUATION AND CHANG, TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THEREUPON MENTIONED GULF AND BLOCK IV, TO THE CONSTERNATION OF HIS STAFF.
SNEIDER

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